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LETTER DATED 27 MAY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement issued on 27 May 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (see annex) concerning the indictment of several senior political and military leaders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sergey LAVROV

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Annex

Statement issued on 27 May 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

The decision by the prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Louise Arbour, to indict five senior political and military leaders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the President of the Federal Republic and the President of Serbia, can only be viewed as being motivated by strictly political considerations.

The haste with which the prosecutor conducted the entire investigation and reached this categorical conclusion is astonishing, even though it is quite clear that in view of the current situation in and around Yugoslavia such decisions require exceptional thoroughness and care.

It can hardly be coincidental that such a step was taken at the very time that negotiations on a settlement of the Kosovo problem are entering their most crucial phase. As a result, the negotiating process has been significantly complicated.

At the same time Louise Arbour remains surprisingly passive in the face of the obvious fact of the aggression by NATO against Yugoslavia and looks indifferently on the consequences of two months of relentless bombing in that country. She remains untouched by the deaths of hundreds of completely innocent persons, the destruction of the country's economic and social infrastructure, the reduction of historic monuments to rubble and the approaching environmental disaster. Was it not the prosecutor's concern to look into who gave the order to inflict the massive strikes which are having such awful consequences? Unfortunately, Louise Arbour is entirely silent on all these questions, which hardly testifies to her impartiality.

Russia is continuing its efforts to find a just political settlement, and to that end will work even harder with all necessary parties, including Yugoslavia. This is consistent also with the role that the international community has entrusted to Russia in resolving the current crisis in the Balkans.